Cover Blown, Informer Sues

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DANIEL SCHORR
. . . background only?

A former paid informant has asked a federal judge here to order the government to continue to protect him, in part by creating a new identity and a new past for him and his family.

The former tipster, Franklin Peroff, is seeking a complete set of officially falsified credentials to verify a new identity, including birth certificates, marriage license and school records of his five children, his lawyers said yesterday.

But to date, they said, he has been provided with only two documents toward establishment of a new identity—a Social Security card and a driver's license.

The government acknowledges that Peroff played a key role in the cracking of an international counterfeiting and heroin-smuggling operation in early 1973. In addition, he has alleged in Senate testimony and in federal court the involvement of fugitive financier Robert Vesco in a multimillion-dollar heroin smuggling scheme.

Peroff filed suit Wednesday after receiving notice last week that the protection and a subsistence allowance he has been receiving would be terminated as of yesterday. The suit contends that Peroff's life was "placed in jeopardy" by his activities as an informant and, in return, he was guaranteed government protection until he and his family were moved to "a safe location" and provided with "redocumentation" to conceal their real identities.

Named as defendants in the suit are the Justice Department, the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Customs Service (which Peroff supplied undercover information), and the U.S. marshal's service, which has been guarding Peroff since last November when he was exposed as a government witness.

Peroff has been a witness

before the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, and it was learned yesterday that Subcommittee Chairman Sen. Henry M. Jackson (D-Wash.) has intervened on his behalf with the Justice Department.

In a letter to Attorney General William Saxbe, Jackson said that further testimony may be required from Peroff and asked that he be provided with the measures asked in the suit.

A Justice Department spokesman said yesterday that Peroff has been granted a 24-hour extension on his protection while Sen. Jackson's request is "under consideration." A motion for a temporary restraining order to prevent the withdrawal of protection, which was filed with the suit, will be heard today in U.S. District Court.

Peroff's name and activities first became public last October when he testified before the Subcommittee that he had tape-recorded some conversations with a Canadian named Conrad Bouchard, the reputed mastermind of a smuggling operation that would bring more than 100 kilos (220 pounds) of heroin from Europe to the United States.

In one conversation, taped in July, 1973, Bouchard told Peroff that either Vesco or Norman P. LeBlanc, a Vesco associate, would bankroll the scheme with $300,000 from Costa Rica, where the financier was then living.

As soon as Vesco's name came up, Peroff testified, federal agents denied him further use of a plane he was to use to fly to Costa Rica and ordered him to make impossible demands on Bouchard to cause the smuggling scheme to collapse. The investigation was then terminated.

Subsequently on July 18, Peroff told the Subcommittee, he telephoned the White House as a means of protecting himself, and related the matter to, among others, special counsel J. Fred Buzhardt.

Four days later, Peroff said he was arrested by city police in New York on a 2-year-old bad check warrant, even though, he said, his address was known only to the White House and the U.S. attorney.

Peroff was held in jail for a few days, he testified until he consented to work with the FBI and Canadian police on a new investigation involving Bouchard, who was jailed on a counterfeiting charge on Nov. 4.

In a court hearing that followed, a police official identified Peroff as an undercover man, forcing him into hiding. On Oct. 1, Peroff contacted the Subcommittee and alleged that the investigation was halted because of Vesco connections with the Nixon administration denied the allegations. Federal drug enforcement officials have maintained that Bouchard used Vesco's name just to string Peroff along.